(29) The first three benedictions.
(30) I Kings VIII, 28.
(31) And before the first three benedictions.
(32) V. P.B. p. 258.
(33) I Sam. I, 10ff.
(34) Ibid. 14.

Talmud - Mas. Berachoth 31b

something unseemly must reprove him. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord.[1] 'Ulla, or as some say R. Jose b. Hanina, said: She said to him: Thou art no lord in this matter, nor does the holy spirit rest on thee, that thou suspectest me of this thing. Some say, She said to him: Thou art no lord, [meaning] the Shechinah and the holy spirit is not with you in that you take the harsher and not the more lenient view of my conduct.[2] Dost thou not know that I am a woman of sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink. R. Eleazar said: From this we learn that one who is suspected wrongfully must clear himself. Count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial;[3] a man who says the Tefillah when drunk is like one who serves idols. It is written here, Count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial, and it is written elsewhere, Certain sons of Belial have gone forth from the midst of thee.[4] Just as there the term is used in connection with idolatry, so here. Then Eli answered and said, Go in Peace.[5] R. Eleazar said: From this we learn that one who suspects his neighbour of a fault which he has not committed must beg his pardon;[6] nay more, he must bless him, as it says, And the God of Israel grant thy petition.[5]

And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of Zebaoth [Hosts].[7] R. Eleazar said: From the day that God created His world there was no man called the Holy One, blessed be He, Zeboath [hosts] until Hannah came and called Him Zebaoth. Said Hannah before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, of all the hosts and hosts that Thou hast created in Thy world, is it so hard in Thy eyes to give me one son? A parable: To what is this matter like? To a king who made a feast for his servants, and a poor man came and stood by the door and said to them, Give me a bite,[8] and no one took any notice of him, so he forced his way into the presence of the king and said to him, Your Majesty, out of all the feast which thou hast made, is it so hard in thine eyes to give me one bite?

If Thou wilt indeed look.[9] R. Eleazar said: Hannah said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, if Thou wilt look, it is well, and if Thou wilt not look, I will go and shut myself up with someone else in the knowledge of my husband Elkanah,[10] and as I shall have been alone[11] they will make me drink the water of the suspected wife, and Thou canst not falsify Thy law, which says, She shall be cleared and shall conceive seed.[12] Now this would be effective on the view of him who says that if the woman was barren she is visited. But on the view of him who says that if she bore with pain she bears with ease, if she bore females she now bears males, if she bore swarthy children she now bears fair ones, if she bore short ones she now bears tall ones, what can be said? As it has been taught: 'She shall be cleared ad shall conceive seed': this teaches that if she was barren she is visited. So R. Ishmael. Said K. Akiba to him, If that is so, all barren women will go and shut themselves in with someone and she who has not misconducted herself will be visited! No, it teaches that if she formerly bore with pain she now bears with ease, if she bore short children she now bears tall ones, if she bore swarthy ones she now bears fair ones, if she was destined to bear one she will now bear two. What then is the force of 'If Thou wilt indeed look'? — The Torah used an ordinary form of expression.

If Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy handmaid . . . . and not forget Thy handmaid, but wilt give unto Thy handmaid etc. R. Jose son of R. Hanina said: Why these three 'handmaids'? Hannah said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, Thou hast created in woman three criteria [bidke] of death[13] (some say, three armour-joints [dibke] of death),[14] namely,